

BOOKS

REVIEWS OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS
WITH NEWS AND VIEWS OF AUTHORS

Did Noah Save Fabre's Wasp?

MORE HUNTING WASPS. By J. Henri Fabre. Dodd, Mead & Co.

FABRE was as many-sided as the insect world which he loved to describe. It is difficult to know which one of his qualities is the most admirable. He has the mastery of words of an artist, the patience of the scientist, the outlook of a philosopher and a bit of sly humor.

One of his enthusiasms was the hunting wasp. He found this insect very complex. Each species had a separate prey. The egg had to be laid on a very definite portion of the larva of some insect, which was paralyzed in order that the food might not decompose before the young had completed its growth. At first Fabre had a low opinion of the hunting wasp. Later he came to admire her maternal solicitude.

His studies led him to doubt the current theories of evolution. He believed that the survival of the fittest presupposed the creation of species with certain predestined instincts. He saw no loophole for the evolutionary theory. Speculation on this point seemed to him puerile. He has several very effective digs at the theory of evolution.

He says, "The child is the great generalizer. For him, the feathered world consists merely of birds; the race of reptiles merely of snakes, the only difference being that some are big and some are little. Knowing nothing he generalizes in the highest degree; he simplifies in his inability to perceive the complex. Later he will learn that the sparrow is not the bullfinch, that the linnet is not the greenfinch; he will particularize and to a greater degree each day, as his faculty of observation becomes more fully trained. In the beginning he saw nothing but resemblances; he now sees differences, but still not plainly enough to avoid incongruous comparisons."

"In his adult years he will almost to a certainty commit zoological blunders similar to those which my gardener retails to me. Favier, an old soldier, has never opened a book, for

the best of reasons. He barely knows how to cipher; arithmetic rather than reading is forced upon us by the brutalities of life. Having followed the flag over three-quarters of the globe he has an open mind and a memory crammed with reminiscences, which does not prevent him when we chat about animals from making the most crazy assertions. For him the bat is a rat that has grown wings; the cuckoo is a sparrow hawk retired from business; the slug is a snail who has lost his shell with the advance of years; the nightjar is an elderly toad who becoming enamored of milk-foods has grown feathers so that she may enter the byres and milk the goats. It is impossible to drive these fantastic ideas out of his head. Favier himself, as will be seen, is an evolutionist after his own fashion, an evolutionist of a very daring type. In accounting for the original of animals nothing gives him pause. He has a reply to everything: 'This' comes from 'that.' If you ask him why, he answers: 'Look at the resemblance!'

It is probably by some such passage as the above that the great Fabre would choose to be remembered. His passages of ecstatic discovery in which he bursts out enthusiastically when the quest of so many years is brought to a close is on account of the depth of emotion with which he fights the theory of evolution. He fights this viewpoint as a scientist because the poet in him is repelled by it.

In an interview at Kansas City, where Edna Ferber recently gave an address, she tells young writers how to begin.

"If you want to write, you will," she said. "Nothing will keep you from it—nor nothing will teach you how. Welcome every sorrow or suffering; every experience, happy or painful, and write about the things you know."

"How else are you to know life?" she asked. "But don't stay there too long. When you begin to write the same thing over and over again, when it's the same Christmas story this year it was last, then stop!"

In the Gift of a Great Book You Conspire With Genius

"WHAT shall I give my friend for Christmas?"

"Do you mean friend, or is it only somebody you happen to know?"

"Friend!"

"Well, nothing is too good, in that case. Give a skyscraper or one of the Thousand Islands or a Russian wolfhound or a grand piano or a grain of radium."

And with all the rest, books.

Or if you can't give anything else, give books. For in them is the magic that commands all the powers of the universe.

Books draw the stars from the sky and the pearls from the deep.

Before wireless telegraphy was ever dreamed of books carried the greatest messages of mankind around the world and across the centuries.

Books anticipate all discoveries and keep the precious past from the hands of thieving Time.

Moving pictures of ancient civilization flash upon the silver screen of the reader's mind. We cannot go back and make phonograph records of dead singers, but in the old poets the rhythms of long ago sing to the inner ear.

All the arts and all the sciences transmit their treasures in print. So each new generation finds the stored material for a continual recreation of the world.

Roosevelt once told a friend that he could remember the look of the page in one of Stanley's volumes that kindled his faith and fixed his will to be the man he finally became. It was in reading Spenser that Keats first knew himself a poet. But even a poor stick of a book may feed the divine fire. Lincoln felt the heart of American history beat in him as he read Weems's Washington. The world laughs at Parson Weems now.

But the world does not laugh at Lincoln.

He who gives a book touches the springs of life, plays upon the keys of an organ whose notes will sound perhaps in other lands and in other centuries.

The giver of books may be a conspirator with genius. Next to the great writer is the one who finds for him the right reader.

Books carry the seed of life. Scatter them widely in the hope of harvest. Plant them one by one in the most fertile soil you can find.

Books are at once the most exquisitely intimate and the most broadly universal means of expression. In them is restoration and repose. In them is the irresistible call to go on.

There are plenty of good books and there will be more. What the world needs is better use of them.

Business men declare that invention and production have outrun effective merchandising, that is, bringing the right thing to the right person. In no field is this so true as in literature.

The mass of people know by hearsay that there are such things as books.

In a population of 105,000,000 a sale of 10,000 copies is called good, 100,000 is amazing. Not the sale but the situation is amazing.

Part of it is the fault of authors, publishers and booksellers. But the greater lack is in the reader or in him who might be a reader, or in him who might create a reader by a well chosen gift.

Libraries are good, but what we need is more individual ownership and use of books—not as so much paper and ink and binding, but as means of life.

Books are food to eat, books are air to breathe, light for the eyes, a path for the feet and a hand to clasp in the dark.

Give books.

For the Ingenious Boy

WORK-A-DAY HEROES. By Chelsea Curtis Fraser. Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
STORIES OF AMERICAN INVENTIONS. By Inez N. McFee. Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
SECRETS OF THE EARTH. By Chelsea Curtis Fraser. Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
BOYS' HOME BOOK OF SCIENCE AND CONSTRUCTION. By Alfred P. Morgan. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.

HERE are four books, somewhat out of the ordinary run, for young readers. They hold forth interesting facts and figures of the type boys and girls usually search the Sunday magazine sections and the scientific publications for. In "Work-a-Day Heroes" we have the romance of the everyday toilers, men who risk everything, even death, in their daily routine. They receive no medals for their brave and courageous duties, which require an abundance of reserve and courage to carry them out. This book tells us something about the miner digging for coal in treacherous tunnels; the iron worker perched aloft on dizzy scaffolds and on a network of iron; the steeplejack dangerously swaying to and fro on his rope slung saddle; the humble window washer, with only a leather belt between him and eternity. To them, of course, it is all in a day's work. And then, too, some one has to do it! These chapters are interesting and as one would expect exciting!

Mrs. Inez N. McFee feels that we have not stopped to realize or to marvel at the number of contributions to the world's wonders, the numerous developments in science and invention that are distinctly American. Because we have not, she saw an opening for a book on the subject, "Stories of American Inventions." She writes of Howe and his struggle to popularize the sewing machine; of Whitney and his cotton gin, which was promptly seized and pirated on a thousand plantations; of McCormick and his reaper; of Fulton and his "folly," the steamship Clermont; of Morse and the telegraph and how a newspaper scoop figured in

its test; of Bell and the telephone; of Lake and Holland and the submarine; of the Wrights and their airplane, and of some of Edison's contributions. A score of anecdotes woven in and about the historical text tend to liven the volume, which is interesting in every sense.

Chelsea Curtis Fraser, in "Secrets of the Earth," presents certain phases of underground treasures and workmanship. In preparing the volume the author states that his purpose is not to present a technical treatise on geology, but rather certain phases of the subject and its related industries. The book holds forth for young readers such subjects as "The Story of Coal," "Oil, the New Industrial Giant," "Iron Ore, the World's Richest Mineral," "The Wonders of Gold," "The Story of Silver," "Diamond, the King of Gems," "Graphite, Backbone of Pencils," "Little Lumps of Clay," "Some Rare Minerals," and others, all of which are at once instructive and interesting.

Alfred P. Morgan's "Boys' Home Book of Science and Construction" will appeal to every live boy, and to many girls. It is a specially conducted tour into the wonderland of science, the fascinating mysteries of which may be explored without leaving home, and at very little expense. The start is made in the kitchen, a miniature laboratory if understood, and with the aid of familiar articles such as water, to replace calcium fluoride, salt instead of phenolphthalein and vinegar in place of cuprous sulphate, the boy unlocks the door which contains the secrets of nature and science. The close relation is shown between great commercial processes and the most common activities. But the author does not stop with chemistry alone. He goes on further to teach a boy something of mechanics, liquids, sound, heat, light, electricity and meteorology. The book is illustrated with plans and diagrams which elaborate for boys a great variety of mechanical appliances which they can make at slight cost. The book is a liberal education in science, and never dry.

'American Art Library' Begins With Henri

ROBERT HENRI: HIS LIFE AND WORKS. With forty illustrations. Edited by William Yarrow and Louis Bouche. Boni & Liveright.

THIS is the first volume in a new series called "The American Art Library." It is almost incomprehensible that such a series has not been started before. America needs it, not only for her own use but for "the export trade." When France considers our artists good enough to be placed in her national collections we ought to furnish means for a fuller knowledge of them.

Henri was a good man to begin with. He represents both tradition and progress, without the deadly formalism that so often attaches alike to "conservative" and "radical" art. As a teacher he has been and still is one of the chief influences for free expression of whatever is in a painter. He is so impressive an artist himself that his associates have undoubtedly imitated him. But that is no fault of his.

Years ago I asked Henri what his method was. He answered, in substance:

"I never tell a young painter how to begin. I say to him, 'What do you want to do? Do it.' Presently he is putting colors together that defeat his own end. I show him how he can accomplish the purpose he set out with."

That is the Henri method—to encourage the artist to work out his own salvation. He does not impose an arbitrary system nor turn aside the current of the artist's own nature.

Any biography of such a man should be primarily a record of his spiritual growth—of his finding himself. Here are some of the facts, external and spiritual:

"He was born of American parents in 1865. His family, of French, English and Irish origin, had lived for several generations in Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio. As a boy he travelled through the West, and the youthful impressions arising from the vivid contrast between the primitive life of Colorado and his experiences in Cincinnati and New York first stimulated his interest in these different phases of American civilization. He early decided to be a writer and almost before he had finished reading his first book had started writing one of his own."

He went to the usual art classes, in Europe. But he learned more in such ways as this:

"One day while returning from work he passed a large granary. His eye was attracted by a crack in one of the walls which revealed an illumination. Surprised and curious, knowing that such buildings were usually kept dark, and seeing neither door nor window through which such a light might enter, he approached and placing his eye to the aperture saw that it was occasioned by a direct ray of the sun streaming through a small hole high up in the western wall. His attention, however, was immediately focussed on a canvas leaning against a box. It was the study of a nude, crouching woman. He watched excitedly, for in it he seemed to see the solution of all

his problems; the simple, yet complete sequence of lines, the ever changing modulation of ruddy flesh tones, the whole painted apparently with a single broad brush stroke which developed the form in all its details. As he stared the light gradually faded and the picture disappeared, but what he had witnessed remained with him many days. Later he had access to the granary and viewing the canvas under normal conditions found it strangely lacking in all those qualities it had seemed to possess; but it had served his purpose, for in it, achieved and definite, he had found the truth for which he had vainly sought. He attacked his work with a new confidence, the subsequent ideas formed during the summer establishing his point of view. His new aim was an exceedingly simple one; to achieve the glow of life, and to restrict himself only to that means which best expressed it. And this sense of vitality of his people is one of the most notable virtues of his art."



Portrait of Roshanara by Robert Henri.

It was in 1908 that a group of independent painters, in which Henri was a leading spirit, began to exhibit together.

"In this same year the group known as the 'Eight' was formed. It consisted of Robert Henri, Maurice Prendergast, John Sloan, Everett Shinn, Ernest Lawson, William J. Glackens, George Luks and Arthur B. Davies. An exhibition of their work was hung in New York and later throughout the larger cities. The 'Eight' was in no sense a society, but simply a group of men with the common purpose of exposing their work and of stimulating the founding of similar organizations outside the dictates of the established societies. They frankly exposed the cause of the 'No Jury' exhibition, and their advocacy of the open forum has had much to do with developing the means whereby artists of all ten-

dencies are given an opportunity to exhibit their paintings."

The editors of the present volume have this to say of Henri as a painter:

"Taken feature for feature his portraits do not give the minute accuracy of statement demanded of the popular painter, but they are far more alive than such stereotyped delineations. One receives from them the impression that they are the truth about the persons while Henri was observing them. Perhaps another day they would appear totally different, but the actual conformation, texture and color of their features would remain the same. One feels, despite Henri's past experience, the entire absence of a set formula and an astonishing capacity to note his sitter's appearance at a given moment. It may be the grin on a child's face, the surly side glance of a Mexican or the stolid stare of a Chinese girl, but it always convinces. The grin is slashed across the face, seemingly with carelessness, actually



Robert Henri.

Stockingful For Children

TALES OF TRUE KNIGHTS. By George Philip Krapp. The Century Company.
AT GREENACRES, THE QUEER LITTLE MAN, THE BOTTLE IMP and POPPY'S PLUCK. By Marion Ames Taggart. Four volumes. George H. Doran Company.
ADELE DORING AT BOARDING SCHOOL. By Grace May North. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.

D R. KIRAPP, who is professor of English at Columbia University, has offered modern children sixteen old English folk tales, with a brief history of the conditions under which each of the various legends grew up and took form and how it was preserved and spread. The collection includes the most delightful of the legends, hero tales and allegories of the Middle Ages which have come down to us largely through minstrels and monkish scribes.

Marion Ames Taggart is known to young people through her books "The Little Grey House" and "The Daughters of the Little Grey House," &c. Now are offered to her readers the Jack-in-the-Box Books in which every boy and girl will be interested. The stories deal with four happy children, their clubs, the mysterious pass words and country adventures, the play house in the tree and the dark attic with all its mysteries.

Here we have the third volume of the "Adele Doring Books." Fourteen-year-old Adele, the leading spirit in the "Sunnyside Club," and her comrades find themselves in boarding school and there continue their good policy of helpfulness. The club motto was "The only creed of which we have need is the art of being kind."

Each of these books is written in a language which will be understood by young people. Here are expressed, along with the tales of imaginary children, many of the young readers' own thoughts and wishes.

X-Rays Reveal Pearly Secret of the Oyster

THE KINGDOM OF THE PEARL. By Leonard Rosenthal. Illustrated by Edmund Dulac. Brentano's.

THERE is an adventurous, a romantic aspect of all commerce, though literature has been slow in expressing it. But the commerce in pearls has so many obvious elements of the picturesque that the poets have done a good deal of diving there for their jewels of speech.

The decorative character of this volume, with its luxuriant color prints and beautiful type pages, might lead one to expect at first glance a text largely devoted to old poems and legends. In fact these are not neglected, though the author doubts if Cleopatra really dissolved that pearl in wine, at least during the course of one dinner. It must have been a long dinner and a strong vintage.

But the larger part of the book deals

in any case, since the available supply tends to lessen. And the conditions of climate in the regions where pearls are found are not such as to tempt competition from men of other lands.

Although many of the methods are still primitive, modern science has done something for the pearl industry, as this passage indicates:

"In 1916 a happy innovation destined to modify pearl culture greatly to its advantage was introduced by M. Solomon of New York. He erected at Ceylon, on the island of Pantivie, a large factory for X-raying the oysters, which is now working with complete success. Shelves containing rows of a hundred oysters are placed on a kind of moving platform which passes them in turn under the X-rays in front of a paper specially prepared for taking photographs. The oysters containing large pearls are opened and collected at once, as their number and position are known beforehand. The

pear shaped pearls and irregular or baroque pearls. Round pearls are found inside the mollusc, and owe their shape to their mobility. The pear shaped specimens lie on the tips of the valves, and their oval form is explained by the pressure exerted on the pearl by the edges of the shell. As for the irregular pearls, they are generally found close to the muscle of the oyster, and are thus hindered in their regular development. A fully developed oyster produces an average of ten million eggs; if it is considered that ninety out of a hundred molluscs are able to reproduce, an idea can be formed of the ease with which they multiply."

The poor, hardworking oyster is not left off with such work as he chooses to do of his own motion. The traders bring him their inferior wares to "plate" or varnish.

"This is the method: After the oysters have been gathered they are exposed to the sun, and as soon as they open a piece of wood is slipped between the two valves of the shell. Then a string of narrow beads is inserted in the oysters, separated from one another by some millimeters. A few grammes of fish scales are added, as the oysters do not contain very much nacre themselves. The piece of wood is then withdrawn and the oyster is left in the water for a year. At the end of this time the beads of nacre will be covered with a layer of pearly substance. They are then detached and a layer of well polished mother of pearl is applied to the side which had adhered to the shell."

The author, in referring to the historic trade, quotes this passage from the writings of an ancient traveller who observed the primitive sales methods of the market:

"I will note the somewhat singular and curious manner in which the Indians, heathens as well as Mohammedans transact the sale of all kinds of merchandise. The whole business is carried on in complete silence and without a word being spoken by any one. The seller and buyer are seated opposite one another like two tailors, and one of them unties his girdle. The seller takes the right hand of the buyer and covers it and his own with the girdle, under which, in the presence of a number of other merchants who have met together, the transaction is made secretly without any one being aware of its details. For the seller and buyer do not speak either with their mouths or their eyes, but solely with their hands, which they do in this wise:

"If the seller takes the buyer's whole hand that means a thousand, and according to the number of times he presses it he indicates so many thousand pagodas, or rupees, or whatever currency is in question. 'If he only takes his five fingers that indicates five hundred, and if he takes one it means one hundred. If he only takes the half up to the middle joint it means fifty, and the tip of the finger so far as the first joint means ten. This is the whole mystery of the method of bargaining employed by the Indians."



Illustration from "The Kingdom of the Pearl."

with present day facts—the methods of securing, preparing, valuing and marketing pearls. The first step—or rather dive—is about as primitive as it could have been in the time of Cleopatra, or of Solomon, for that matter. Diving is hard on men and is never likely to be an overcrowded occupation. If divers were paid in proportion to their hardships and to the possible length of service pearls would be even more expensive than they are to-day.

The price is not likely to go down.